

# TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

TODD STAPLES  
COMMISSIONER

December 17, 2009

Mr. Lawrence Strickling  
Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information  
National Telecommunications and Information Administration  
U.S. Department of Commerce  
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Assistant Secretary Strickling:

Thank you for your cooperation with Texas in administering the State Broadband Data and Development Grant Program (SBDDGP), as well as the Broadband Technologies Opportunity Program (BTOP). I write today to encourage your attention toward some serious timing discrepancies that are resulting from the excessive rush to award BTOP funds ahead of much-needed information that will be made available by SBDDGP awards, which have not yet been made.

The State of Texas recognizes the tremendous size of these programs and is eager to utilize the programs to increase the ability of Texans to take advantage of the many opportunities created through broadband access. As you know, the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) has invested significant resources into utilizing the federal broadband programs. Because our state does not have comprehensive or verified data regarding broadband accessibility, TDA believes strongly in the importance of using the SBDDGP to urgently develop a map of broadband service from which decisions for further investment of the federal dollars can be based.

TDA's goal has been to work with Connected Nation to develop a broadband map, and as data is obtained and processed, to develop maps ahead of NTIA's application timelines for the BTOP process. The goal was to utilize these "preliminary" maps to help potential BTOP applicants better understand the unserved and underserved areas of the state and to enable the state to provide more strategic comments to NTIA during BTOP application reviews.

With the final round for BTOP and the Broadband Initiatives Program (BIP) most likely opening in January 2010 and with Texas' SBDDGP application remaining unfunded, I am gravely concerned that the absence of mapping data will negatively effect Texas' ability to maximize BTOP and BIP funding. Therefore, I respectfully request your assistance in ensuring Texas'



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mapping and planning grant application is immediately approved. In that regard, TDA is available to assist in any manner that you feel will assist in moving Texas' mapping and planning grant application forward. Additionally, I request you align the timing of future rounds of BTOP grants with mapping completion timelines so that we as stewards of the taxpayers' precious resources can make the most informed decisions on where to invest those resources.

Please feel free to contact me directly with any concerns you may have regarding these requests. I look forward to working with you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Todd Stapler". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping "T" and a cursive "Stapler".

TS/KS/ks